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SUBJECT: DARFUR PEACEKEEPING: THAI DEPLOYMENT APPROVED BUT
HELP WITH THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT NEEDED ON SITE SURVEY

REF: BANGKOK 934

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

SUMMARY, COMMENT, RECOMMENDATION

11. (C) Summary and Recommendation: The Thai Peace Operations Center has confirmed a May 7 media report that the Thai Cabinet had given formal approval for Thai troops to join UNAMID. Despite the approval, preparations by the Thai military remain held back by Sudanese government refusal to approve a requisite site survey in advance of deployment, as well as issues connected with Sudanese delay in clearing peacekeeper equipment and supplies through its port. Post recommends Department press the UN and perhaps ask Beijing to encourage Sudan to allow the Thai site survey contingent to travel to Darfur soon and clarify port clearance procedures soon, since these are prerequisites for the Thai deployment to proceed.

12. (C) Comment: Thai Cabinet approval for the deployment is an encouraging and positive step forward for deployment to Darfur and appears to have cleared domestic political and legal hurdles to the deployment. If the RTG had sought Parliamentary approval due to concerns with Article 190 of the Constitution, the deployment could have become subject to domestic political wrangling. End Summary and Comment.

CABINET APPROVES DARFUR DEPLOYMENT, SITE SURVEY NEEDED

13. (C) Contacts at the Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters Peace Operations Center have confirmed with us the May 6 announcement by the RTG that the Cabinet had approved of Thai troops joining UNAMID. The Center told us that the Thai military continues to plan for eventual deployment to Darfur, but that the Sudanese government has refused to grant permission for a Thai site survey team to visit the UN-designated sector to which the Thais would deploy.

14. (C) The Thai military completed an initial site survey in 2008, but the UN decided to change the Thai sector after the visit. It is our understanding that the UN agreed that another site survey is necessary before deployment, as this is standard operating procedure prior to peacekeeping deployments. In addition, the Thai site survey is crucial because the base from which Thai would operate in western Darfur must be expanded, as it cannot currently accommodate the planned Thai deployment and will require construction upgrades.

¶5. (C) After Sudanese approval of the site survey, the Thai timeline for pre-deployment training and deployment is 180 days from when the site survey is completed. Deployment to UNAMID will likely be delayed until 2010 if the team cannot conduct a survey soon. It is our understanding that the Thai would join the Chinese as only the second Asian country to deploy peacekeeping troops to UNAMID; we also recommend considering engaging Beijing to influence Khartoum on this matter.

¶6. (C) Beyond Sudanese intransigence on site survey approval, the Thai continue to seek assurance from the UN that equipment and supplies will be cleared through Sudan's port without long delays (reftel). The Peace Operations Center has sought such assurances, but has told us that they have not yet received them from the UN. The Thai UNAMID deployment will be at risk of further delay, through no fault of the Thai, if this issue as well as the site survey remain unresolved.

JOHN